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This document contains a PDF export of the website Armchair Histories, which was discontinued in 2024. Author of all articles is Magnus Eriksson, Brisbane.



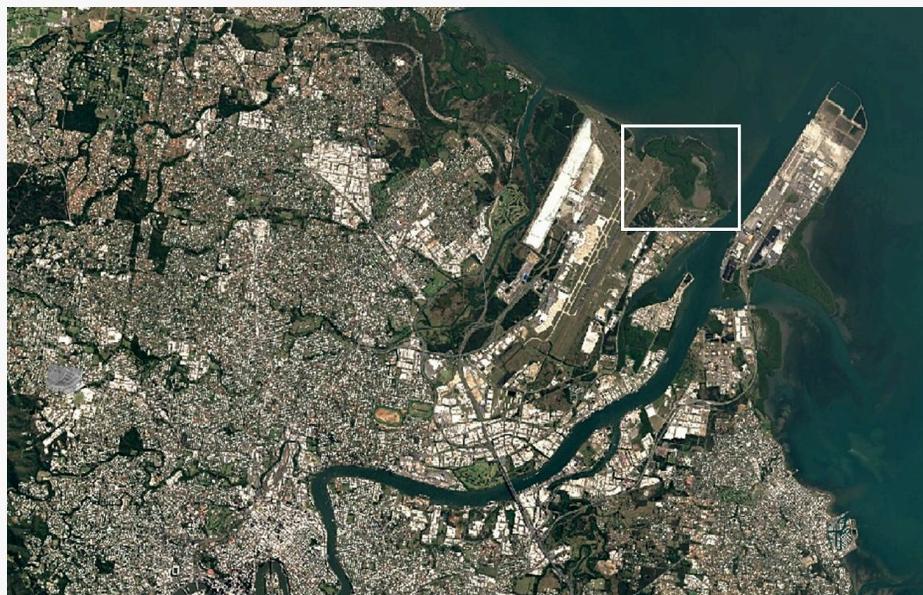


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## King Sambo and Queen Juno

Cribb Island, Myrtletown and Serpentine Creek – places along the northern Brisbane River estuary that are lost forever. The only remaining natural environment in this part of the bay is a small corner of saltmarsh and mangroves, squeezed between the expanding airport, the Brisbane sewage treatment plant and industrial estates. But this land has a couple of surviving features that I believe were once named after a prominent aboriginal couple with the European names Sambo and Juno - namely SAMBO CREEK and JUNO POINT – though you have to look at historical maps to spot those names.

First let's set the location in context. The area is on the northern shore of the river mouth, across from the Port of Brisbane. There is no way to reach the land by foot – it is entirely encircled by the airport to the west and the sewage treatment plant to the south.



The below aerial shows the targets of our investigation. The whole peninsula has often been referred to as Uniacke Point, or Point Uniacke (sometimes spelled with only "k" and without or without the "e"). The name dates from the famous expedition of 1823, when the name was given by John Oxley in honour of his assistant. The precise definition of the "point" varies in historical records, and some sources have it as synonymous with the much smaller Luggage Point.

Luggage Point is the small spur which today contains the sewage treatment plant outfall. The aboriginal name is Boorennba, meaning "Place of Whiting". The name Luggage Point was in use from at least 1839. We also see the location of Point Juno and Sambo Creek, and what used to be Serpentine Creek which is now landfillled and covered by airport runways.



Our First map is from 1840 is based on Dixon's trigonometrical survey of the bay. The map covers mainly areas south of the river but it does contain the northern shore including Uniacke Point, and (to the south) Bulwer Island which is incorrectly labelled Parker Island. There's also a marker for the German Missionary settlement at Nundah.



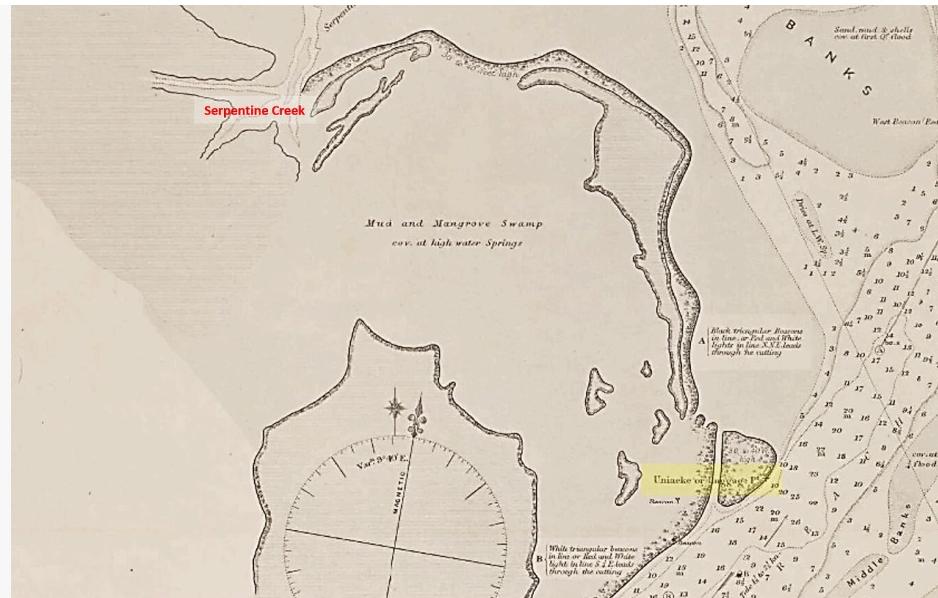
This 1842 map is very low-resolution but it shows the location of Serpentine Creek. The shipping lane across the river bar was marked with two beacons, and on the other side of the river we see Fisherman's Islands, which are now covered by reclaimed land and the Port of Brisbane.



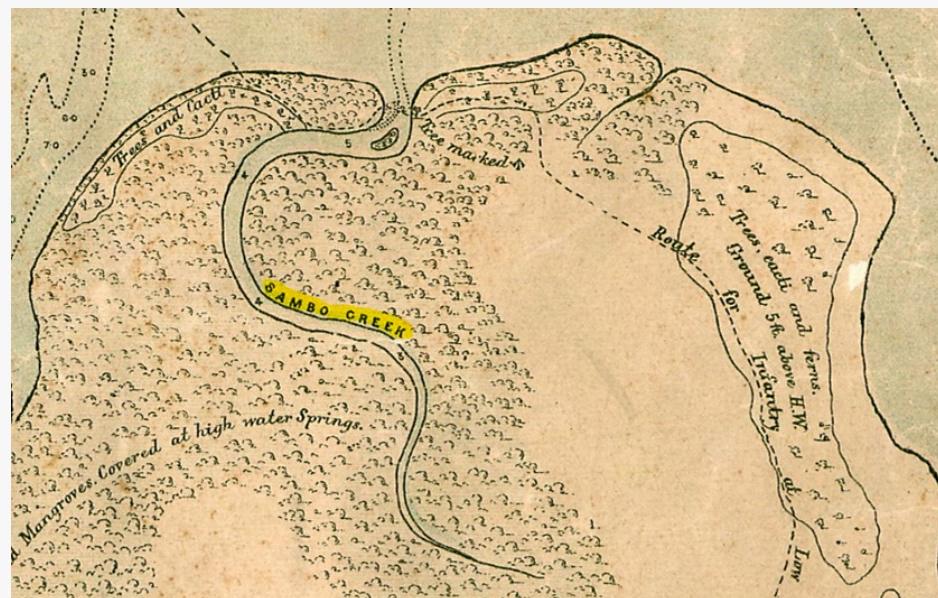
The peninsula is rather shapeless in this 1846 map, and Uniacke Point seems to be referring to the bayside shore. Serpentine Creek is named "Serpentine River" – it was indeed a substantial watercourse which drained much of the current airport area. All of it has now been reclaimed.



By 1873 the area was properly surveyed with accurate locations for "Uniacke or Luggage Point", and for Serpentine Creek. Some of the marshy intertidal areas are also marked but we see no trace of Sambo Creek. I can see two possible reasons for this; either the surveyors visited the area at peak tide and Sambo Creek was indistinguishable from the surrounding mangroves, or the surveyors simply didn't notice this substantial creek (which is 30-50 metres wide for a long stretch). Both scenarios seem unlikely, but perhaps it was a combination of circumstances.



And here's the first record I found of Sambo Creek. A military map of 1889 containing great details on the nature of soils, suitable creek crossings, drinking water sources and other particulars relevant to armed forces traversing the land. The recommended crossing across Sambo Creek was marked with an arrow on a tree. Other than the maps, I've found occasional mentions of Sambo Creek in newspapers from the 1920s, 30s and 40s, so the name was in use for at least 50 or 60 years.

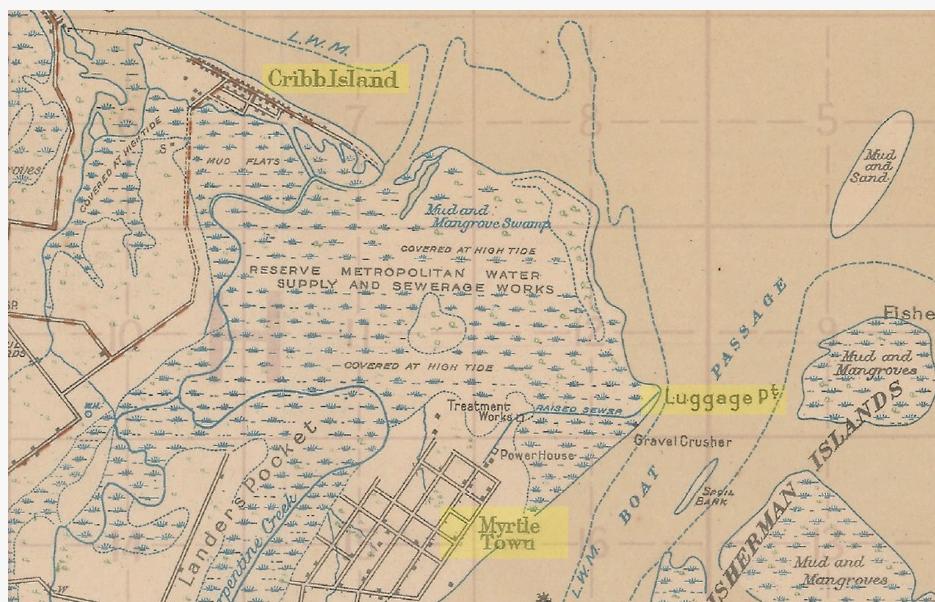


This 1892 map refers to Luggage Point and also "Myrtle", which was a short name for Myrtletown, a little agricultural settlement by the river. This beautiful spot, which was once the site of a small school, vineyards and plantations, is now entirely obliterated by industrial development. Possibly the ugliest neighbourhood in town, the new cruise ship terminal is currently being built right next to the sewage treatment outfall. Welcome to Brisbane!



In 1925 Luggage Point was marked with the sewage outfall from the wastewater treatment plant which was finished that year – a major piece of infrastructure development comprising 11 miles of sewer from North Quay with two pumping stations along the way, sludge aeration and sedimentation tanks north of Myrtletown and a final channel discharging the effluent at Luggage Point. Airports were still science fiction, and the whole peninsula was marked as a municipal sewage and water reserve. Sambo Creek is again missing from this map.

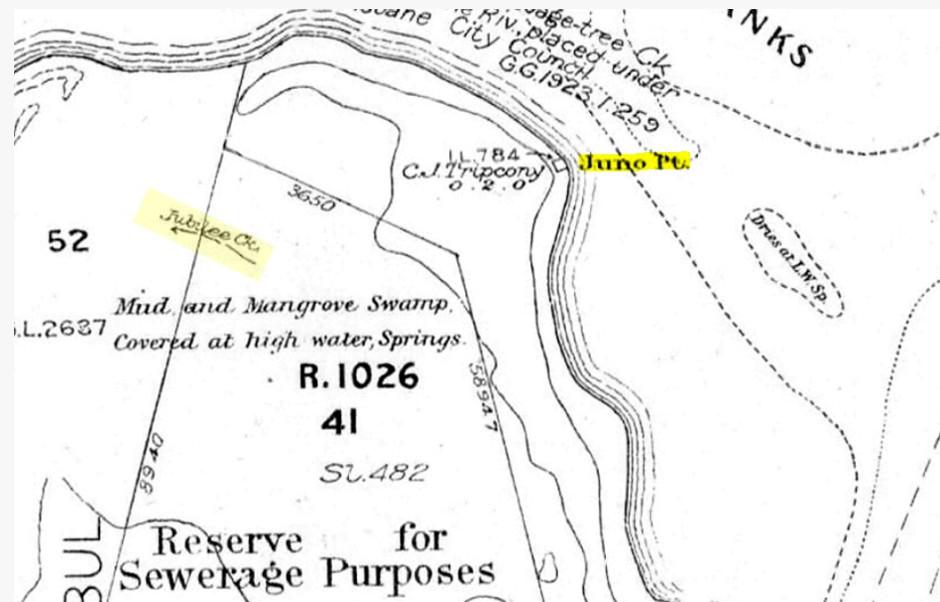
We mentioned before that the name Luggage Point was used in 1939 and possibly earlier. The origin of the name is not clear. One theory is that the location was used to offload luggage and other cargo for transport to Brisbane, presumably allowing the lightened ship navigate the un-dredged river. And there seems to be something to this story. Brisbane river had two bars – the main bar outside the river mouth and a smaller, inner bar that stretched from Luggage Point in a NE direction. If ships did require unloading before progressing up river then this was the obvious spot. Any transport would have been by smaller boats - there were no roads from Luggage Point to Brisbane at the time, and transport across the sodden mudflats was so difficult that it hindered the development of Myrtletown well into the 1900s. Another possibility is that the name was given as a provision for future arrangements which were superseded when the inner bar was dredged in the subsequent decades.



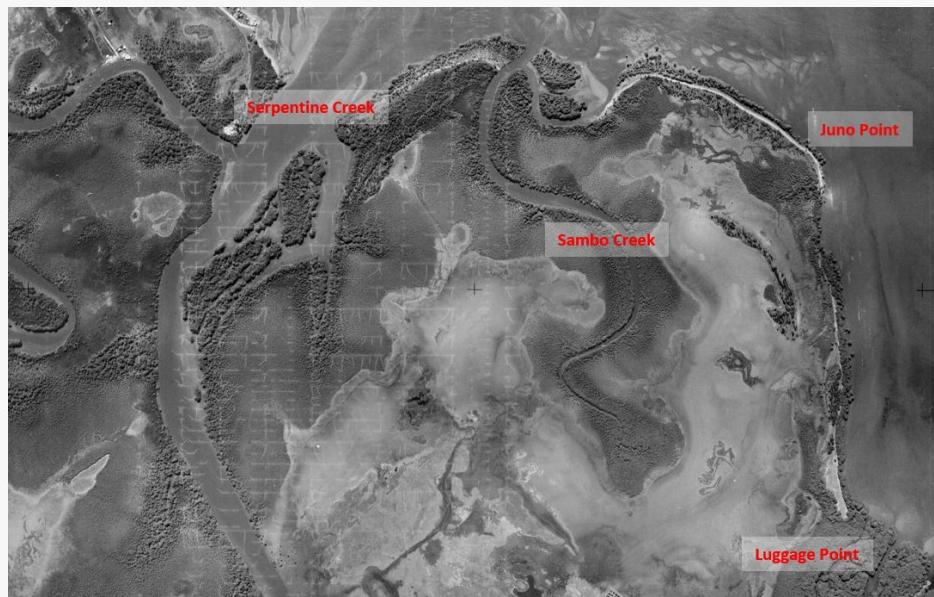
We've now arrived in 1926 and the below map has some new points of interest. Most importantly, this is the first mention of Juno Point that I've found. As you can see, it's more of a subtle convexification than a "point", but it seems to be slightly higher than the surrounding land which presumably places it safely above the high water mark.

There are very few mentions of Juno Point in other sources – a couple of newspaper mentions from the 1930s. Clearly the name was rarely used. We can also see that Sambo Creek had changed name to Jubilee Creek by this time. This is the first record I've found of the new name, and I haven't been able to work out its origin. It seems odd that such an out-of-the-way and rarely visited creek would have been named to commemorate any significant jubilee.

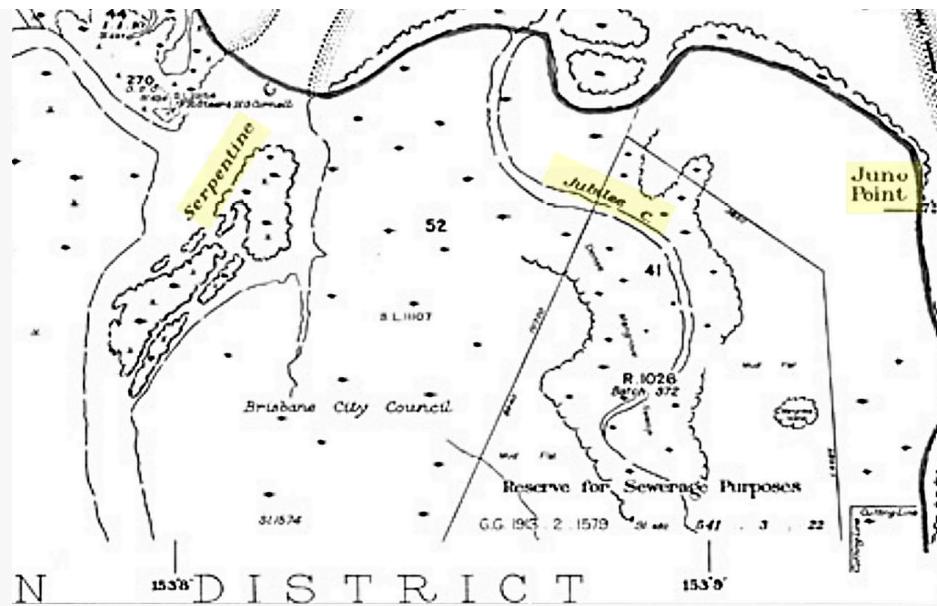
We also see the name "C. J. Tripcony" appearing at Juno Point, with a tiny square marking an area of land on the shore. Tripcony was a family with a long and pioneering history of oyster fishing in Moreton Bay and the Pumice stone Passage, and "C. J" and his relative "T. J". ran an oyster fishery on two banks only a short distance from the new sewage outfall. The operation was referred to the Commissioner for Public Health in 1928, and was subsequently shut down. It appears that the little square of land was a lease of crown land for equipment used by the Tripconys.



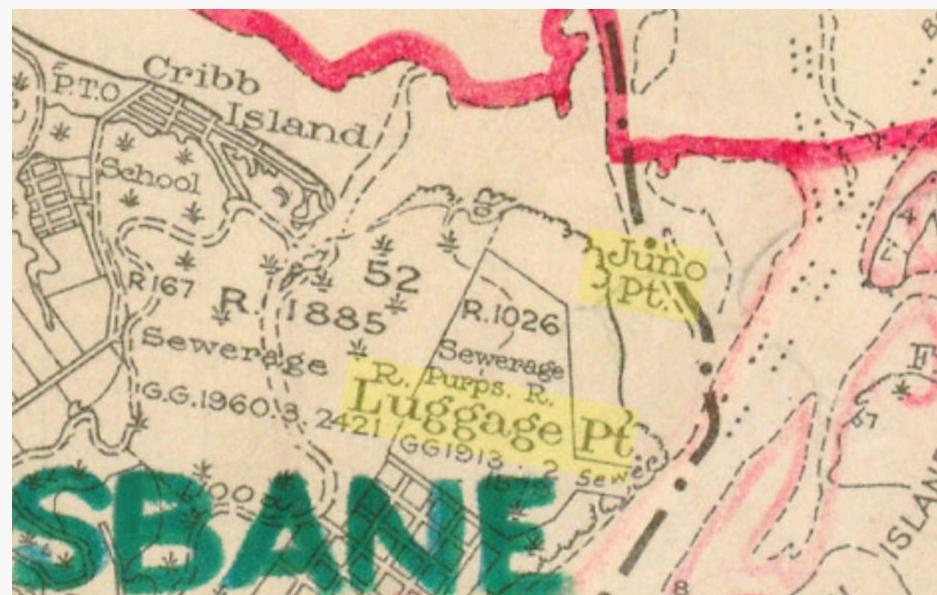
From 1946 we have the first aerial photo of the area, showing all the points of interest plus some of the intact Cribb Island village (top left corner).



The below cadastral map from 1959 shows Juno Point (now without the Tripcony lease), Sambo Creek under it's new name, and the still intact Serpentine Creek.



In 1964 Juno Point is still marked, as is Luggage Point and Cribb Island.



...and the final map from 1970. Juno Point remains on some detailed maps even today, but it seems to be otherwise lost from public consciousness.



I will now be skating on very thin ice, trying to pin down the potential source of the names Sambo Creek and Juno Point. I will be talking about two aboriginal persons referred to using English names, and I will talk about them without any real knowledge of their cultural context or personal histories. This narrative is based solely on history documented by Europeans. It is also possible that there were more than one person referred to as Sambo in the region – I don't believe this to be the case but it can't be ruled out.

The various records that I've found indicate that:

- Sambo was described as the "heir apparent", or son, of Toompani of Stradbroke Island. Toompani was considered a leader of his community at Amity, and he was a recognised hero having rescued passengers of the Sovereign wreck all the way back in 1847.
- In 1881, the Collector of Customs in Brisbane requested funds to supply Sambo, an "aborigine of Moreton Bay", with fishing gear and a boat. The reason for this is gift is probably documented in the request but further information requires a visit to the State Archives.
- Memoirs in the Brisbane Courier recollect Sambo as being a "Bribie black", and the owner of a cast-off boat from the port office, of which he was captain. The whaleboat was fitted with a mast and sails, and the writer claimed that he returned the favour by "saving the lives of more drunken oystermen and others than was generally known."
- There are many records of Sambo having a partner called Juno, or "Beauty".
- The Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford has a basket from Moreton Bay, woven by "King Sambo's Queen Juno"
- There are several records of King Sambo and Queen Beauty/Juno from the Coochin and Caboolture area in the 1880s and 90s.
- The couple had at least one son (Willie) and a daughter (Kitty)
- In 1896 a Sambo was trialled for having murdered another aboriginal man with strychnine, in Kedron Park
- Sambo died in "Cutchie", in the Upper Caboolture area sometime in the late 1890s
- In 1899 Juno was recorded at the Durundur Reserve, Woodford



This breastplate was held in the Caboolture Shire Council Rooms, and the text appears to say "Cutchie" where King Sambo was reportedly buried. I haven't been able to find this this location, apparently it was close to "salt shed" of upper Caboolture.



So there it is - a remnant of nature with two places that (I believe) were named after King Sambo and Queen Juno. Perhaps a search of colonial correspondence can reveal more about this couple and their travels across the bay, and their activities around Point Uniack. I don't know what the future holds for the land but it seems inevitable that the airport, or the port, or both, will eventually claim it.

Any additional information on this land, and any known associations with Sambo and Juno, would be very welcome. And if you're planning a boat trip here please let me know, I'd love to have a closer look.

Sources are available on request.



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## Brisbane's Place of Floggings

Under the floor of a shop on Queen Street, the soil is fertile with the blood, flesh and tears of countless convicts who were tied to the "triangle" and flogged in this very spot, between 1828 and 1841. This was the site of the male Convict Barracks of Moreton Bay, and the archway where "Old Bumble" and other flagellators performed their trade.

The Georgian-style barracks stretched along the northern side of Queen Street from the Albert Street corner and 108 m toward North Quay. Below is a model of the complex, created for an upcoming article for the House Histories project.



The Moreton Bay Penal Settlement of the 1820s and 30s was a particularly brutal place, and new arrivals knew that they were likely to be worked to death. So how do you motivate a person to comply with such a plan? The solution is to offer an alternative even worse than being worked to death - and the customary option was to be strapped to a wooden frame, or "triangle", and flogged with the "cat o' nine tails".

Tom Petrie provided this account of the floggings in Queen Street(1):

Many a time he has seen members of the chain gang flogged in Queen Street in the old archway at the prisoners' barracks. They got from fifty to two hundred lashes at a time. They were stripped naked, and tied to the triangle by hands and feet, so that they could not move. Some were flogged for a very small offence, and on the backs of others were unhealed marks of a previous flogging. The rest of the prisoners were arranged round in order to get the benefit of the sight, and a doctor stood by in case the unfortunate fainted. Then the punishment began, and as each stroke fell the chief constable counted aloud the number. Out of all those he has seen flogged, father does not remember even one man fainting, though sometimes the blood flew out at every lash. Some poor wretches cried aloud in their agony for mercy, or to their mothers and friends to save them, others cursed and swore at the floozer and all the officials, and others again remained perfectly still and quiet.

A more gruesome record was made of a similar punishment in Sydney<sup>(2)</sup>:

*"I saw a man walk across the yard with the blood that had run from his lacerated flesh squashing out of his shoes at every step he took. A dog was licking the blood off the triangles, and the ants were carrying away great pieces of human flesh that the lash had scattered about the ground. The scourger's foot had worn a deep hole*

*in the ground by the violence with which he whirled himself round on it to strike the quivering and wealed back, out of which stuck the sinews, white, ragged, and swollen. The infliction was 100 lashes, at about half-minute time, so as to extend the punishment through nearly an hour.*

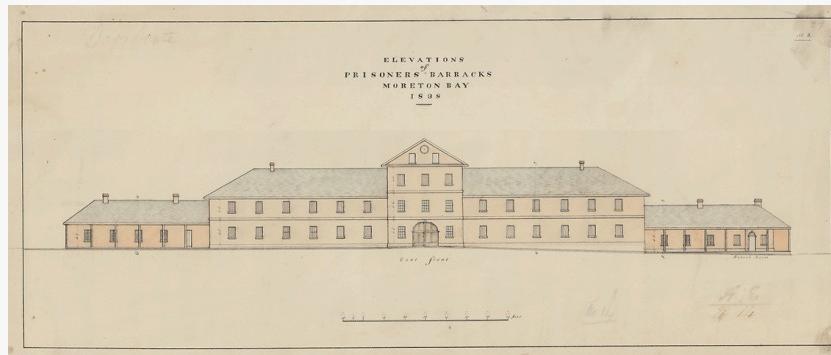
The typical sentence in Brisbane was 50-100 lashes, but records exist of 200 and 300 lashes, some with a fatal outcome.

But flogging was toilsome work and consecutive sessions could stretch over many hours in the summer heat. Luckily, he foresighted Commandant Logan had created a shady and cool place in the large archway under the central tower of the convict barracks. The archway was also referred to as "Old Bumble's Workshop", after a resident flagellator. J. J. Knight provides the following account of Bumble<sup>(3)</sup>:

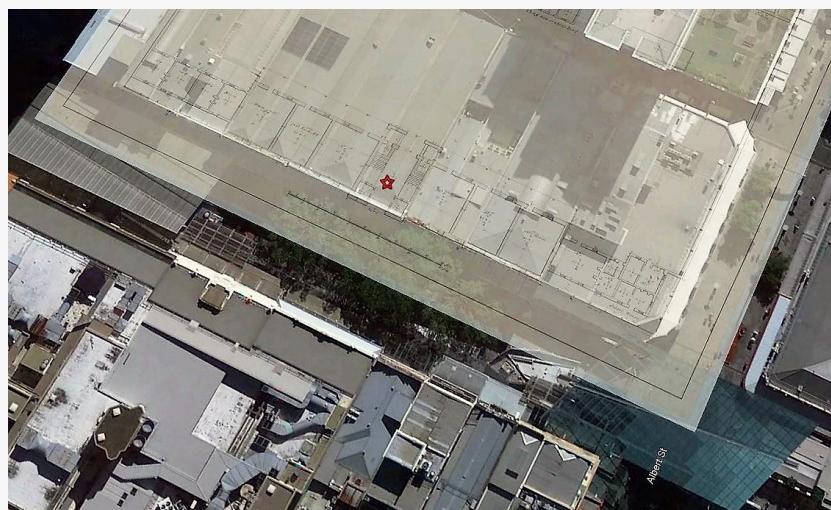
*"Bumble (who obtained the nickname owing to a deformity in his legs) was a most brutal individual, who rejoiced when he heard the appeals of his victims, and gloried in his calling. Sometimes five or six men were ranged before him to be whipped, and these wholesale orders he liked best. After finishing one job he would wash his "cat" in a tin of water, which he always carried with him, and it is affirmed that he has been known to quench his thirst with its contents."*

With that disturbing image in mind, let's see if we can find the location of the archway and "bumble's workshop" today. Fortunately, the State Archives are in possession of some excellent plans and elevations of the barracks dating back to 1830<sup>(4)</sup>. These and other plans were used to create the accurate 3D model shown above.

First an elevation of the barracks along Queen Street, as seen from the current location of the Meyer Centre:



The ground-floor plan of the buildings, dimensioned and overlaid on a modern aerial photo, looks as follows. The red star marks the location of the triangle in the archway.



The precise current location of the demolished archway is 90-112 Queen St. According to the eyewitness accounts, the triangle was located inside the passageway and would have been roughly 5-10 meters from today's Queen Street boundary.

So what do we find here today? Well, the old barracks site is occupied by the row of buildings that replaced them in the mid-1880s. Overlaying the barrack façade on a contemporary photo, we can determine location of the central tower.



Moving closer to the buildings, we see the location of the lost archway and “Bumble’s Workshop”.



And if we go closer still, we can mark the spot where the triangle once stood, in what is now a women's fashion shop.



Strolling down Queen Street today, among the polished buildings, tourists, shoppers, balloon benders and buskers, it's hard to imagine the scene of 190 years ago. A dusty dirt road flanked by the brooding barracks. The crack of the cat on naked skin, screams for mercy, and the monotonous counting of the Chief Constable reverberating from the dark cavern under the tower. But it all happened, right here on the mall. Next time you walk past with your shopping bags and a gelato in hand, spare a thought for the convicts that paid with the sweat, blood and lives to found our city.

In a future article on the [House Histories website](#), we will dwell deeper into the design and history of the barracks, and their importance in the civic fabric of early Brisbane.

### Notes

1. Petrie C.C., 1904, *Tom Petrie's Reminiscences of Early Queensland*.
2. White C., 1889, *Convict Life in NSW and Van Diemen's Land, Parts I and II*
3. Knight J. J., 1895, *In the early days: history and incident of pioneer Queensland*
4. Queensland State Archives Series ID 3739, Moreton Bay Penal Settlement Maps and Architectural Drawings



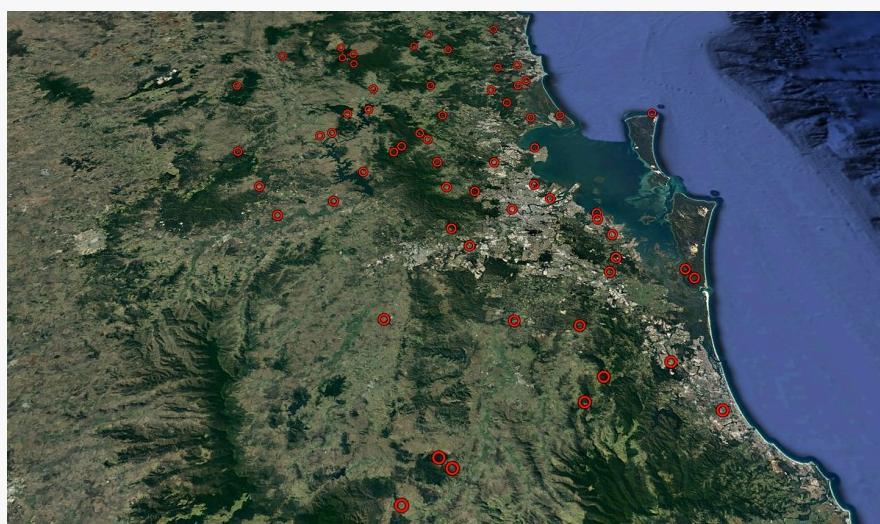

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## Lost Bora Rings of the South East

South East Queensland has plenty of artefacts of 60,000+ years of human history, but they are subtle and often hidden in the rural scenery or lost under suburban development. Bora rings were particularly important as social and ceremonial focal points, and they came in a variety of configurations depending on location and specific use. I'm not qualified to explain the details of their design or cultural significance, so let's settle with this definition by the Aboriginal Heritage Office:

*"A bora ground most commonly consists of two circles marked by raised earth banks and connected by a pathway. One of the rings would have been for everyone — uninitiated men, women and children. The second ring would have been for initiated men and the young men about to be initiated. Occasionally, one ring can be found that would have been used for corroborees and for the rare fight."*

For a lover of heritage and history it is always very sad to contemplate that which has been lost, and particularly so when it comes to the delicate relics left behind by the first people of the land. The below map, adapted from Satterthwait and Heather (1987)<sup>(1)</sup>, shows the location of 62 rings in the south-east corner, described in various historical records. It is by no means comprehensive. Every one of these locations constituted a vital ceremonial hub for their surrounding communities. Please pause for a minute and ponder this.



Some rings remain in a good state of repair - for example in Samford, the Glasshouse Mountains, Nudgee, Camira and Toorbul. But many have been lost and are largely forgotten by the people that now live on the land. And some appear to be in a declining state – partially cared for, or not at all, and slowly fading into the surrounding landscape. Without active maintenance, these earthen rings will be erased by vegetation, grazing and erosion.

So I decided to dig into the archives and aerial photos, to see if I could find some of these apparently lost rings. In the process, I received a fascinating lesson in cultural geography and the wealth of aboriginal history that surrounds us.

Before continuing this story, I acknowledge the traditional custodians of these lands, and pay my respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

### Kippa Ring

The most famous Bora ring in the Brisbane region also gave name to the Kippa Ring suburb in Redcliffe. The name "Kippa" indicates that this ring, or set of rings, were used to initiate young men.

For this site I relied on descriptions produced by J. G. Steele in his essential "Aboriginal pathways on South East Queensland and the Richmond River" (1984) (2). Steele wrote:

*"There was a ring at Kippa Ring, about 30 metres north of Klinger Road West, and about 400 metres east of the junction of that road with Anzac Avenue. Outer and inner dimensions measured in 1948 suggest that the diameter across the top was about 24 metres north-south and 22.5 metres east-west."*

This was a double-ring complex, with the connecting pathway extending south-west and finishing in a smaller ring in an unknown location, possibly close to Anzac Avenue. Using Google Earth with a current aerial photo and Steele's measurements, we can identify the location of the ring quite precisely (click the image to enlarge).



The earliest good aerial photo of this location is from 1956. When overlaid on a modern view we see that the land had been cultivated by that time, but looking closely there appears to be the remnants of a ring. Today, the original bora is gone but the location is appropriately used by aboriginal community groups.



### Kipper Creek

A brief record of a bora ring at Kipper Creek in Dundas was confirmed by a report in a newspaper article from 1948(3):

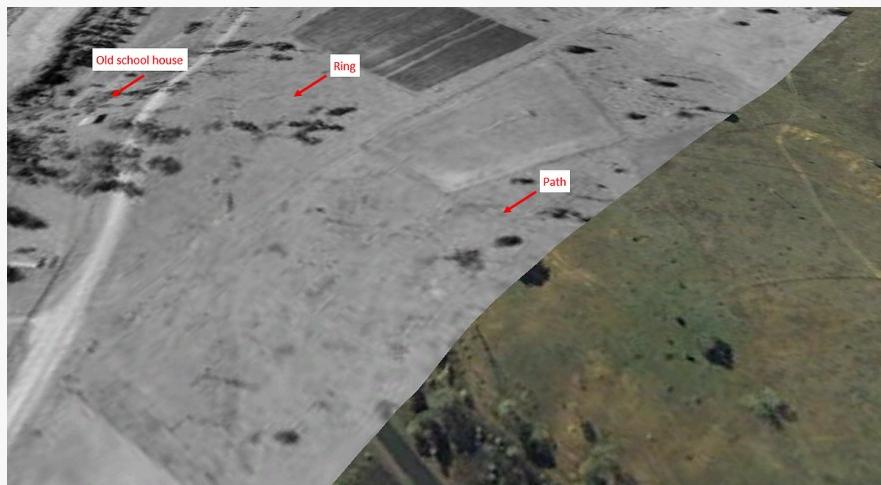
*“..there is another one (circle) on the property of my father... at Kipper Creek, Dundas, opposite the school. It is also on the top slope of a hill, with a large ring, and an open trench leading to a smaller one in the same direction as the one described at Esk.”*

The site referred to at Esk had a connecting path running in a rough north/south direction, as did many of the double rings. Bora sites often occupied high ground with the paths running along the crests of hills.

The little school at Dundas is long gone, but a quick look at old maps confirmed its location. In the below aerial photo from 1967 we can see the school and the original path of the road which has since been realigned. And across the road, we see a large earthen ring of about 23m diameter, on the hillside.



In the next image we have overlaid the 1967 photo on Google Earth, showing the topography of the site, and the path running along the top of the ridge in a south-westerly direction.



And when we remove the old aerial, we can clearly see the ring and the old path along the ridge. This is an incredible view of the site in its original configuration. The path has been severed by the re-alignment of the road but is clearly visible for at least 230 meters. There is no sign of the smaller ring.



In this research I quickly learned that the rings are not necessarily more visible in older aerials. Far more important are the ground conditions at the time of the photo. Winter pictures are generally better, particularly after a dry spell when the surface vegetation has wilted away, making the compressed and slightly raised soil around the rings and paths stand out in different shades.

A few examples of different years and dates from Kipper Creek are shown below. The clearest picture (top left) was taken in the winter months during the long drought of the late 2000s. At other times, the ring was barely discernible at all.



I haven't found anything on the origin of the name "Kipper Creek", but it seems highly plausible that it refers to the bora ground and the initiation ceremonies that once took place in this very location.

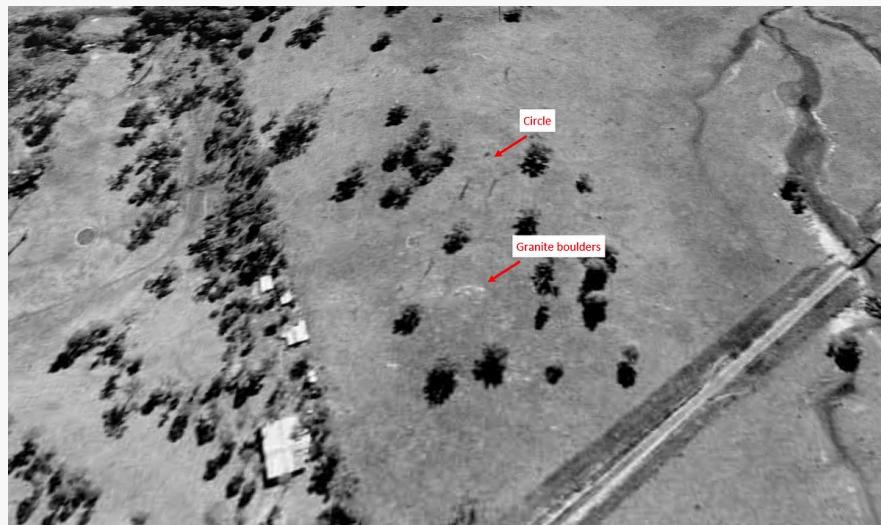
### Keperra

Lets' continue with the next likely derivation of the word "Kippa" – namely Keperra in Brisbane's north-east. This bora ground was well known and reported (4), particularly in the 1940s when the golf club started to encroach on the site (5). The large ring was located close to the clubhouse, and despite an apparent commitment to the Historical Society to protect it, we find that the ring has been destroyed together with the path and the smaller ring which was close to Samford Road. This is truly a "lost" bora ground.

Stelle's site sketch overlaid on a modern aerial photo gives a clue to the locations.



In the below 1936 aerial, we can see (if you enlarge the picture), the 21-meter diameter ring on the hillside, as well as the group of granite boulders indicated by Steele, which also belonged to this ceremonial complex.



By switching back to today's aerial, we can confirm that the ring, path and boulders were obliterated by the golf club driveway. Judging by the aerials this disaster took place sometime in the late 1970s.



The smaller circle has fared no better, and its location given by Steele is now under a corner block on Satinay Street. One can't help wondering if the people living in that house know of the significance of their block of land, and the events that took place there.

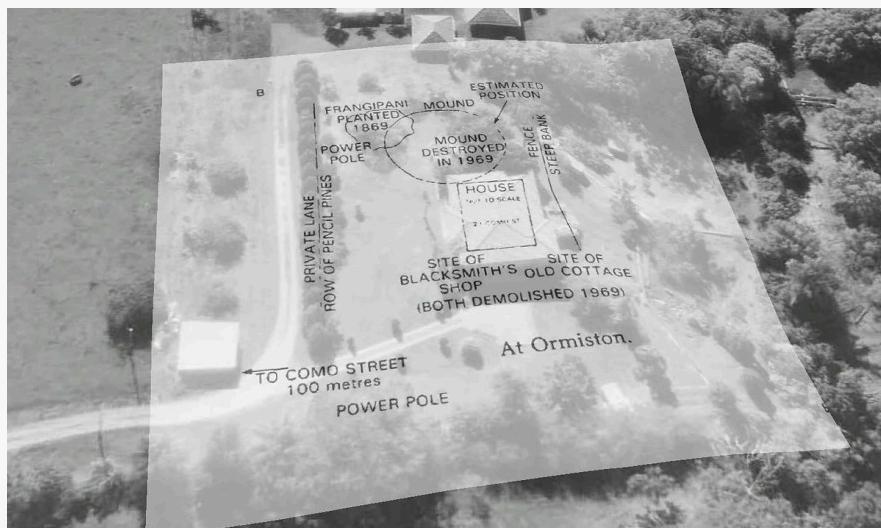


### Cleveland Ormiston

There were at least two rings in the Cleveland district. Steele wrote about one of them:

*"The ... bora ring is on private property at the end of Como Street, Ormiston. Half of the ring was destroyed in 1969 when a house was built there, but the remaining part has been preserved by the owner. The ring was originally about sixteen meters in diameter, with an opening towards the south, and it occupies a splendid site on the edge of a cliff overlooking Moreton Bay."*

To find this ring, we use the site sketch produced by Steele, overlaid on Google Earth with a 1981 aerial photo. We can see the large ring close to a smaller house which was present at the site at that time.



As we remove the old overlays, we are left with today's view of the property and the location of the lost ring, on the edge of the cliff overlooking the bay.



There is also a surviving and maintained ring at Cleveland's Hillard's Creek. It appears to be gradually encircled by industrial development, but let's hope that the site continues to receive protection into the future.

### Glenore Grove

Steele wrote:

*There is a bora ring at Glenore Grove, about two kilometers from the junction of Laidley and Lockyer Creeks. It is oval, with diameters of twenty-four meters and twenty-one metres, and a stump about two meters west of the ring was once a large tree with many marks on it. A path extends for several hundred meters in a south-easterly direction.*

In this case there is no need to consult old aerials. Using Steele's sitemap and a contemporary view, we can spot the ring and path beside the main street. The path is visible for about 450 meters before it disappears.



I've found no other information on this Bora, which has survived remarkably well in the village setting.

### Palen Creek

Here's another ring that is invisible most of the time and requires very specific ground conditions to "pop out" on the aerials. Steele described it as follows:

*"There is a well-preserved bora ring at Palen Creek; about twenty meters in diameter, it stands on flat ground .... There is no obvious opening in the circular mound and this suggests that perhaps the ring was used only for corroborees."*



Again, I have found no other information on this ring.

### **Samsonvale**

Samsonvale has a double-ring complex which appears to be well preserved and protected behind fencing.



The main ring is 21 meters in diameter and is connected to the smaller ring on a hillside through a winding path nearly 550 meters long. The path is not visible on the aerial photos and has been retraced here based on Steele's sketch. The Samsonvale bora ground was reportedly last used in 1878.



### **Lost and not (yet) found**

This article covers only a small sample of what may still be out there, and I did search for many other rings that could theoretically still be visible, but without success. Any information on these grounds would be gratefully received. Examples include:

- The Alberton Bora, at the junction of Albert and Logan Rivers. This was reportedly a spectacular complex, with a smaller ring flanked by stones and with an unusual stone structure in the centre. The ring was reportedly destroyed in 1957 and should be visible on aerial photos of that time.
- A very large group of three interconnected rings by the Albert River, investigated and recorded in 1910 (6). The path connecting the rings stretched in the usual north/south direction for more than 700 meters. The complex was located on the eastern bank of the Albert at Tamborine Village, on Mr Henderson's farm and about 400 meters from his house. I believe that the Hendersons lived about 2 clicks east of the Waterford Tambourine road. After all my efforts – no ring sighted.
- At Fairney View, by a waterhole about 300 meters behind the (now demolished) railway station.
- The ring close to Waldron Road at Tamborine, which is on a site hidden by trees. My fear is that this ring was destroyed during construction of a road.

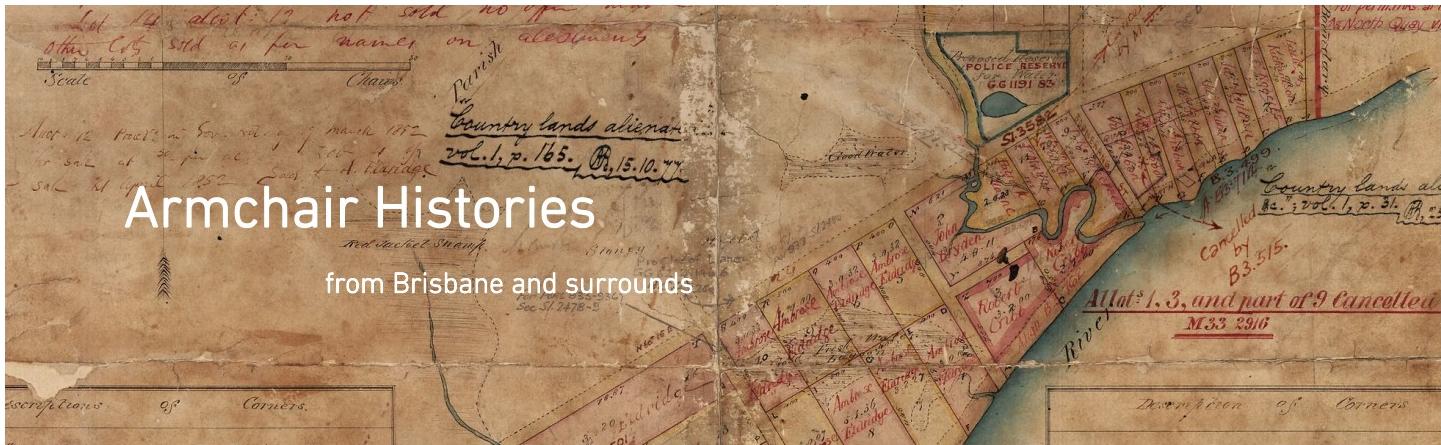
..and others.

As Australians, we must cherish these precious sites. Please beware of the indigenous heritage that surrounds you and leave it untouched. And if you find anything that may be undocumented, report it to the relevant authorities.

### Notes

1. Satterthwait L., Heather, A. Determinants of Earth Circle Location in the Moreton Region, Southeast Queensland. Queensland Archaeological Research. Vol 4 (1987).
2. Steele, J. G 1984, Aboriginal pathways on South East Queensland and the Richmond River.
3. Queensland Times, 4 Aug 1948
4. The Queensland Naturalist, May 1938
5. Several newspaper reports in the 1940s.including: The Telegraph, 8 April 1941; The Telegraph, 9 Dec 1943; Brisbane Telegraph, 10 Sept 1949.
6. Proceedings of the Royal Society of Queensland, Vol XXII, Part 1, 1909

Aerial photography by Google Earth and Image Queensland.


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## The Bribie Puzzle

Let me start by listing the variations to the name "Bribie Island" that I've come across, in records from the 1830s to the 1870s:

*Brisbane Island, Breiby's Island, Bribeys Island, Briby's Island, Brieve's Island, Brisbie Island, Brabies Island, Bribus' Island, Bribie's Island, Brady's Island, Bribee's Island, Brie Island, Britie's Island, Bribi Island, Bribic Island - and finally - Bribie Island.*

Chronologically, the spelling evolved from predominantly "Breiby's Island" and "Bribey's island" in the mid-1830s to "Bribie's Island" in the 1840s and 50s, with the final name "Bribie Island" solidifying in the 1860s. But there were plenty of variations of the name, intentional or otherwise, well into the latter half of the century.

How can this be? We're talking about a prominent chunk of geography, in South-East Queensland, named by Europeans less than 200 years ago. It points to something unusual going on in those early days of the colony. The modern name emerged slowly, over a period of decades, apparently under a cloud of confusion.

In usual order, this simple question turned into minor compulsion with plenty of red herrings and side-tracks. I can't claim to have cracked the case, but I do have some views on the existing theories, and a couple of new ones to offer. This will be a brief summary of the armchair research, with a hypothesis at the end.

### The Basket Weaver

Most famously, Tom Petrie stated in the second-hand account recorded by his daughter that his father Andrew had a "vague recollection of a connection" between a convict by the name of Bribie, who was a basket maker, and the island. "*Whether he was blown ashore there, or what, he does not know*"<sup>(1)</sup>. This event would have taken place in the first decade of the penal settlement, between 1825 and 1835.

Thomas Welsby picked up this flimsy strand, and with it, he weaved a fantastical tale of the ex-prisoner Bribie who fell in love with an aboriginal lady of the island tribe and settled there happily ever after, in Rousseauian bliss<sup>(2)</sup>. But this is a romantic fiction. There is no "Bribie" in the Moreton Bay records, and with the Island being within the 50-mile restricted zone that surrounded the penal colony until about 1840, any attempt at free settlement would have been dealt with by the authorities.

### Not Flinders

Some texts claim that Flinders named the island during his trip through Moreton Bay in 1799. This is easy to disprove - Flinders travelled some way up Pumice Stone Passage, but he named it "Pumice Stone River", and incorrectly surmised that Point Skirmish was located at the southern end of a peninsula<sup>(3)</sup>.

### Aboriginal origins 1 - "Boorabee"

It has been hypothesised that the name is derived from the word "Boorabee", used by the nearby Ngugi tribe. Meston claimed that this was the name given to him during a visit in 1874<sup>(4)</sup>, but Steele points out that the word was not part of the Bribie vocabulary<sup>(5)</sup>. Earlier accounts have the local Jindoobarrie name for the island as "Yarun"<sup>(6, 7)</sup>.

### Aboriginal origins 2 - 'King Brady'

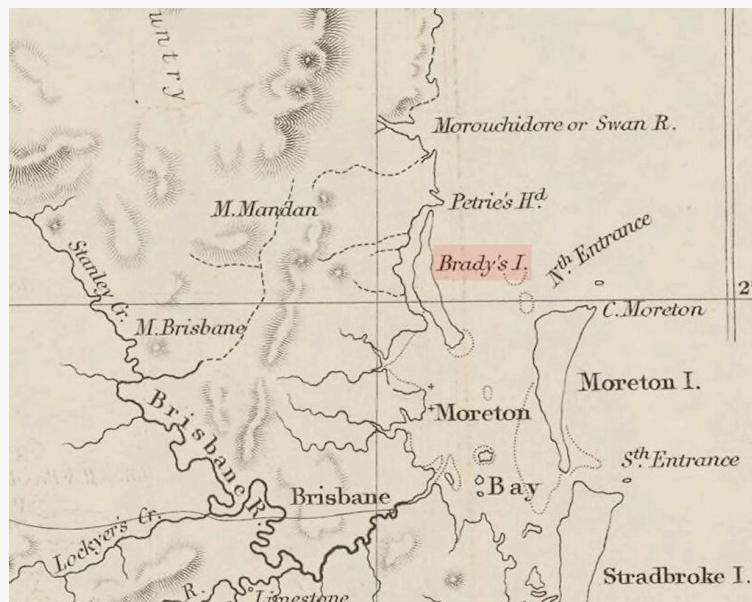
A letter by Commandant Foster Fyans, dated 1837, mentions four members of "Bribey's tribe" who approached the settlement with information on escapees roaming their district (8).

'On the morning of the 6th of April, four natives came from Bribey's Tribe, with information of Four Bushrangers being there, committing great depredations. In the hope of detecting them, and keeping up a good understanding with these distant tribes, I promised the natives some reward if they would accompany Lieut. Otter in the Boat. On the same day Lieut. Otter and Mr. Whyte with the Boat's Crew left

This could be interpreted as "Bribey" being an aboriginal person, and possibly a chief of the Jindoobarie tribe.

I've found no record of a "Bribey", but a "King Brady" did live on this part of the coast in the 1800s. One source has Brady's birth at about 1850<sup>(9)</sup>, and another claims that he was "very old" by the time he walked into the Bribie Island mission to die in 1892<sup>(10)</sup>. There are good records of him in the Tewantin area in the late 1870s<sup>(11)</sup>, but I'm not aware of his whereabouts at other times, or his birth tribe.

This lead became more interesting when I read a text from 1845, containing the journals of an 1842 expedition to Wide Bay by H. S. Russell, accompanied by no other than Andrew Petrie himself<sup>(12)</sup>. The map drawn during this expedition has the name "Brady's Island".



This was the first survey of the coast, and the party busied themselves by baptising features of the coastline as they sailed past. At the time of the expedition the name "Breiby's Island" was already in use, but it seems plausible that Petrie dictated the specific spelling 'Brady's Island'. And we know that Petrie was very familiar with the aboriginal tribes of the area.

So, is it possible that "Brady's Island" refers to King Brady? If he was the originator of the name, then he would have been at least 75 years of age when he returned to his presumed native island to die in 1892<sup>(13)</sup>.

#### "Brisbane Island"

This one requires a backstory, so bear with me.

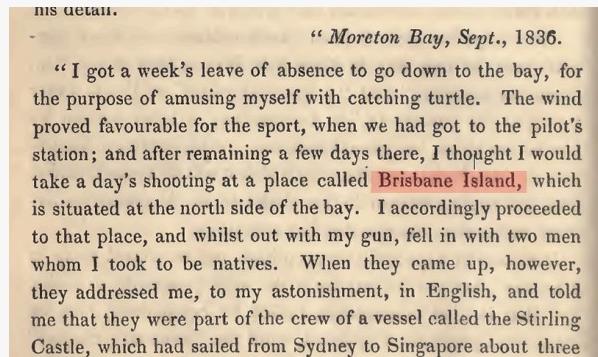
We've established that the first European name for the island was "Point Skirmish", given by Flinders following a confrontation with the Jindoobarie in 1799. Flinders also misnamed the tidal passage "Pumice Stone River". A few years later in 1822, Captain Bingle travelled far enough up the Pumice Stone Passage to infer that the peninsula was, in fact, an island<sup>(14)</sup>.

The final survey in preparation for settlement was undertaken in 1823 by John Oxley, who entered Moreton Bay from the north and found the castaway Pamphlet on Point Skirmish, before proceeding to map and name the River Brisbane. The penal settlement was established in Redcliffe in 1824 and moved up-river the following year.

Through all these events and until 1836, and despite evidence to the contrary, Bribie Island was referred to as Point Skirmish and Pumice Stone Passage as a "river". I've found no evidence of European activity on the island during this time. As the 1830s dawned, Commandant Logan set

out on a final expedition to reach Pumice Stone River from the West, but he was intercepted by aboriginal tribesmen and killed near Mount Hallen.

In 1836 Lieutenant Otter, a recent arrival from Sydney and the new Superintendent of Works, visited the island with a "surveying party" to hunt for turtles, and happened across two of the survivors of the Stirling Castle shipwreck. Among the flurry of correspondence surrounding the subsequent rescue of Eliza Fraser, Otter wrote in a letter to a relative:



The transcription is from the book "Shipwreck of the Stirling Castle" (15), and is claimed to be *verbatim et literatim*. But another transcribed letter from Otter, from the same year, stated (16):

Sir,  
In compliance with your desire, I have the honour to state for the information of His Excellency the circumstances through which I became acquainted with the wreck of the Stirling Castle, and the further steps which I took in pursuance of your instructions to rescue a part of the crew who were in the hands of the natives.  
On Monday the 8th inst., after having visited the Pilot Station, I proceeded for a day to Breiby's Island<sup>27</sup> at the north of the bay, previous to returning to the Settlement. I arrived there on Tuesday and whilst out shooting in the afternoon, two men were brought up to me whom I at first took to be natives as they were quite black and perfectly naked. When they came up they told me, that they belonged to the brig Stirling Castle which had left Sydney for Singapore in the middle of May last, and that she had

So - we have two separate transcriptions of letters from the same writer, one referring to "Brisbane Island" and the other "Breiby's Island". These are the first known records of the name.

"Brisbane Island" shows up again in a newspaper report from the Sydney Morning Herald in 1846 (17), referring to Captain Wickham's survey of the Bay and of the island.

object. The survey of the Bay having been determined on, and Captain Wickham having volunteered his services, they were accepted, and the Surveyor-General was pleased to direct, on the application of the Committee, the survey of Brisbane Island, which was a necessary preliminary. Captain Wickham ascertained that a passage existed into the harbour, round Moreton Island, with 5 fathoms, and from thence a good open channel, averaging 10 fathoms, was traced to the anchorage off Brisbane River, known as the white buoy anchor.

But again – other documentation by Wickham uses the name "Bribey's Island". Another frustrating example of the lack of naming consistency.

And then there's the 1888 Aldine History of Queensland, compiled by the Sydney-based W. F. Morrison, which uses the rather contrived name "Brisbie Island" (18).

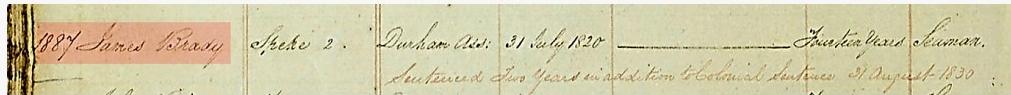
Government to make thorough exploration of the north-eastern coast and the Gulf of Carpentaria, and to make maps of the coast line, noting its rivers and bays, together with a fuller description of the character of the country. His first point of interest was Moreton Bay, which he extensively examined, but in which he failed to discover the entrance of any river. Landing upon Brisbie Island, which lies outside of the bay, he endeavored to hold intercourse with the natives, but they showed a disposition of antagonism, which led to an encounter, and resulted in a skirmish between his men and the natives, hence the name applied to the place, Skirmish Point. Proceeding further north he discovered and examined nearly all the bays that up to the present time are found marked upon our maps. During his investigations

It appears that "Brisbane Island" was by used at least by some people in the first decades. We shall return to this shortly.

### Shipwrecked Brady?

I give credit to Andrew Petrie's accounts, and it seems entirely possible that a convict, or free person, suffered a shipwreck or was "blown onto" the island as Petrie recalled, and that the island became associated with this person. This would have happened before 1836 when the name "Breiby" was first used. Many have looked (including yours truly) and there is no "Bribey", "Breiby" or similar surname in the records of the penal settlement.

But let's return to the map from "Exploring Excursions I Australia", which shows the name "Brady's Island", which was possibly dictated by Andrew Petrie. If Brady was indeed a hapless sailor, are there any records of him? Well – how about this fellow (19):



James Brady arrived in Brisbane in 1826, sentenced to secondary transportation for absconding from his employer in Newcastle (20). He was listed as a seaman and reported as being involved in some mishap on the cutter "Glory", journeying across the bay to Dunwich in 1829 (21). I haven't been able to find anything more on this character but he makes for an interesting candidate, and in the right timeframe.

### Hypothesis

Putting all this together, I propose the following hypothesis for the botched baptism of Bribie Island.

When Captain Bingle returned to Sydney from his visit to Moreton in 1822, with news that Point Skirmish was probably an island, a view formed within the NSW Government that the island should (once its status had been confirmed) be named "Brisbane", in honour of the Governor. However, they missed the boat – in a literal sense. John Oxley left for Moreton Bay in October 1823, and a few weeks later he would find and name the river Brisbane. The name was thereby claimed, and it became even more entrenched when the penal settlement moved up-river and almost immediately became known as "Brisbane Town" (22). The name "Brisbane Island" remained in some records but was not used locally in Moreton Bay.

It is telling that Lieutenant Otter and Captain Wickham, both government officials, were quoted as using "Brisbane Island", at least in some accounts.

Meanwhile, an undocumented shipwreck on the island, or possibly the presence of a prominent aboriginal chief, gave rise to the colloquial name "Brady's" and its many permutations. But this was problematic - islands were traditionally named after members of the aristocracy and not after some commoner or aboriginal chief. It took time for the popular name to solidify and become accepted. The final name "Bribie", recorded for the first time in 1845 (23), may well incorporate both "Brisbane" and "Brady".

The mystery needs a non-armchair researcher to put on the white gloves and dig deep into the colonial correspondence. Based on my contacts with the Bribie Island historical society, I'm pleased to report that this work is underway. I'll keep you posted.

### Notes

1. Petrie, Constance C. 1904, *Tom Petrie's reminiscences of early Queensland*.
2. Welsby, Thomas. 1937, *Bribie the basket maker*.
3. Flinders, M. 1814, *Voyage to Terra Australis...*
4. Meston reporting in: The Brisbane Courier, 20 Oct 1923.
5. Steele, J. G 1984, *Aboriginal pathways on South East Queensland and the Richmond River*.
6. Christopher Eipper of the German Mission, reporting in: The Colonial Observer (Sydney), 14 oct 1841.
7. Lang, J. D. 1847, *Cooksland in North Eastern Australia, the future cotton field...*
8. Reproduced in: The Royal Historical Society of Queensland, 1976, *The runaway convicts of Moreton Bay*.
9. Queensland State Archives, Item ID 847067 82/2613
10. Queensland State Archives, Item ID 847447 92/13903
11. King Brady assisted W. Senior in a trip to Noosa Lakes, as described in: Senior, W. 1888, *Near and far, an angler's sketches of...*,
12. Russell, H. S., *Exploring Excursions in Australia*, Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London, Vol 15, 1845.
13. Assuming Brady was at least 20 by the time "Breiby" was used for the first time, in 1836
14. Extract of the logbook from the 'Sally', reproduced in: Gill, J.C.H. 1968. *In search of a river: two little-known voyages...* Queensland Heritage.
15. Curtis, J. 1838, *Shipwreck of the Stirling Castle containing...*
16. Letter from Lieutenant Otter to Captain Fyans, 27 Aug 1836, transcribed in: Steele, J. G, 1975, *Brisbane Town in Convict Days*.
17. The Sydney Morning Herald, 10 Aug 1946.

18. Morrison, W. 1888, *The Aldine History of Queensland*.
19. Queensland State Archives Series ID 5653, Chronological Register of Convicts at Moreton Bay.
20. The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser, 13 Jan 1825.
21. Mentioned in: Index to Letters from the Colonial Secretary, SLQ-A2-Series-Roll-A2.4-2013-11.pdf
22. The first record found for "Brisbane Town" is in The Australian, 30 March 1826.
23. The first use of modern spelling "Bribie" found in The Shipping Gazette and Sydney General Trade List, 16 Aug 1845





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